

Crazy Names

My name is ghetto with a capital G. It fits me well. Like me, my name will leave you confused. Jyquetta is a concoction of syllables and sounds that my mother brewed up from an old crush's girlfriend. She liked the guy so much that she became friends with his girlfriend, Marquette. That's where the Quetta part of my name came from. A couple of years ago I discovered that Quetta is the name of a city in Pakistan. I was so happy when I found that out, but now I don't care for the fact. Neither my mother nor I have any idea where she got the "Jy".

Markeen is my middle name; she took the first part of Marquette for Markeen. But my mother told me that Markeen is an African

By Jyquetta Santiago

princess's name. I didn't believe her, so I looked it up. Sure enough, it was true. She was just lucky on that one. How is my first name going to be Ghetto, and my middle name African? Doesn't that make you go hmmm? I use my mother's last name, Santiago. Leave it to my mother to give me a Spanish last name. I'm glad she didn't give me my father's last name, Repress. Ugh, I can't imagine being called Jyquetta Markeen Repress. That would really be a trip. My last name is also the name of two different cities, one in the Dominican Republic and another in Chile.

The name Jyquetta Markeen Santiago is culturally diverse. That is the coolest thing about it. I have a ghetto first name, an African middle name, and a Spanish last name. What was my mother thinking? Whatever it was, I'll never change my name. I've learned to appreciate it. Vontanivia, Kayebis, Shanqonda, and Chanda are the names she gave my other sisters. I'm glad I was the first one.

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Pink Sweater

Shattered ceramic, muffled pain, surfaced bruises. Shivering I gather the sweater you bought for me that I never did like. The pink one with its explosion of fluffy soft white marshmallow flowers. Feminine, beautiful, perfect. Everything you constantly say I'm not. I wear it for you to be happy Mami, but now when I most need its comfort, I can barely feel the fabric as it hugs around my skin. Why are my lips trembling, my body quivering? Why won't it armor me from the coldness? The glacier that permanently inhabits my bones. A hidden cave of sadness. Fear consumes my heart. Perhaps I've damaged it. I think in this very second Mami, I find truth to the words that you would scream, causing me to weep in sadness,

"Mala agradecida, nunca puedes hacer nada bien." I could never do anything right. Broken. I awake as the Monster confronts me. The Ogre, the Beast, your lover (but not my father) screams and departs while a smile decorates your face and you contently obey. How, Mami, can you smile? You open the door. You pack my suitcase. In the kitchen evil celebrates. The worms feast inside my belly. Cold arroz con pollo and my fork dancing to a zombie rhythm as I dissect. The wounds, the fragile heart. Tainted innocence. Our last meal as a family. You say "apurate y come" but my mouth is dry, my body is paralyzed, my mind refuses to think. But not my eyes. My big brown eyes continue to cry a river, and I panic, afraid that we will all drown.

You say it's time for me to leave. How can you still wear a smile? Black heart, on a petite woman, fair, beautiful. Why are

you so beautiful, Mami? You say you love the sounds I hear from your bedroom at night and that they alone surpass the idea of my simple existence. My inferior cries. You close the door behind me. Naked, petrified, and very alone. I exist. Why can't you see that? You cried for hours in agonizing pain when you brought me into this world. Papi even says you bit the nurse in pain. Isn't that true, Mami? But I am no longer real. In your red party dress, glorified curves, an immaculate replica of a Spanish porcelain doll, you dance with him. But the little girl with the pink ugly sweater that no one likes doesn't exist.

By Jennifer Suarez
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